

The Building Blocks of Reading and Writing

The road to becoming a reader begins the day a child is born and continues through the end of third grade. At that point, a child must read with ease and understanding to take advantage of the learning opportunities in fourth grade and beyond – in school and in life. Here are some things that will help you understand how children learn to read.

Sentences are made up of separate words. Words have parts called **syllables**. The words bag, ball, and bug all begin with the same sound. When a child begins to notice and understand these things, he is developing **phonological awareness** – the ability to hear and work with the sounds of spoken language.

When a child also begins to understand that spoken words are made up of separate, small sounds, he is developing **phonemic awareness**. These individual sounds in spoken language are called **phonemes**. For example, the word *big* has three phonemes, /b/, /i/, and /g/. (*A letter between slash marks, /b/, shows the phoneme, or sound, that the letter represents, and not the name of the letter*). For example, the letter b represents the sound /b/. Recognizing and reading words by translating the letters into speech sounds to determine the word's pronunciation and meaning is called **decoding**.

Children who have phonemic awareness can take spoken words apart sound by sound (the name for this is **segmentation**) and put together sounds to make words (the name for this is **blending**). Research shows that how easily children learn to read can depend on how much phonological and phonemic awareness they have.

Phonics instruction helps beginning readers see the relationships between the sounds of spoken language and the letters of written language. Understanding these relationships gives children a tool that they can use to recognize familiar words quickly and to figure out words they haven't seen before.

Word-study instruction is the step that follows phonics instruction. It helps older children learn to apply their phonics knowledge and knowledge of word parts (such as **prefixes, suffixes, and root words**) as they read and write words. Rapid **word recognition** means that children spend less time struggling over words and have more time getting meaning from what they read, which, of course, is the real purpose for reading.

Children learn more about how print works when they spell and write on their own. When they begin to write, children draw and scribble. Later, they use what they are learning about sounds and letters when they try to write words. This is often called **invented**, or **developmental spelling**. Because invented spelling encourages children to think about the sounds in words and how the sounds are related to letters, it can help children develop both as readers and writers. However, after kindergarten, children need well-organized, systematic lessons in spelling to help them become good spellers.

Fluency is the word for being able to read quickly and accurately. Fluent readers recognize words automatically. They are able to group words quickly to help them get the meaning of what they read. When fluent readers read aloud, they read smoothly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, like speech. Most beginning readers do not read fluently. However, by the end of first grade, they should be reading grade level books fluently.

Children who are poor readers often do not have the vocabulary knowledge they need to get meaning from what they read. Because reading is difficult for them, they cannot and do not read very much. As a result, they may not see new words in print often enough to learn them. Good readers read more, become better readers, and learn more words; poor readers read less, become poorer readers, and learn fewer words.

Comprehension means getting meaning from what we read. It is the heart of reading. If children can sound out the words but don't understand what they are reading, they're not really reading. Comprehension can be improved by using strategies to make sense of what is read. Making predictions, paying attention to the way a reading selection is organized, creating mental pictures, asking questions, and summarizing are examples of these strategies.

What To Do At Home

- Talk often with your child to build listening and talking skills.
- Have your child use his imagination to make up and tell you stories. Ask questions that will encourage him to expand the story. Ask "Why didn't the dog just run away?", "Where did the boy live?", "What kind of eyes did the monster have?"
- Talk about books that you've read together. Ask your child about favorite parts and characters and answer his questions about events or characters.
- As you read with your child, have her point out such things as front and back covers and the title. Have him find details in the pictures, then help her find and point to words that describe those details.
- Sing or say nursery rhymes and play word games. Example; "How many words can you say that rhyme with fox? With bill? Try "The dog is big. *Big*. Can you say the sounds in *big*? Now can you write the letters for the sounds?"
- Point out letters while you read and have your child name them.
- Point out labels, boxes, newspapers, magazines, and signs that display words with letter-sound relationships that your child is learning in kindergarten. Listen to your child read words and books from school.
- When your child is writing, encourage her to spell words by using what she knows about sounds and letters. Do not worry at his point whether the word is spelled correctly. Let him sound out the word and write the sounds he hears.
- As you read aloud, pause from time to time to ask her about the meaning of the book. Ask him to retell the story, or tell in his own words what the book was about.

Kindergarten Language Arts Assessments

- Produce rhyming words – (Tell me a word that rhymes with pat, get, hit, lot, bug)
- Produce words that begin the same – (Tell me a word that starts with b)
- Blending onsets and rimes
Sometimes you can add a sound to the beginning of a word and make a new word.
What word do I have if I add the /p/ sound at the beginning of ink? /p/ink
- Segmenting onsets and rimes
Sometimes you can take a sound away from the beginning of a word and make a new word.
What word would I have if I took the /b/ sound from the beginning of bake? (ache)
- Phoneme blending
Words are made by putting sounds together.
What word would I have if I put together the sounds /b/ /e/ /d/? (bed)
- Phoneme segmentation
Taking a word and telling the sounds that are in the word.
What are the sounds in the word mud? /m/ /u/ /d/
- Concepts of print
Can your child recognize a letter standing all by itself? A word all by itself? A sentence? Where to start reading a sentence and where to go at the end of a line of words? Can he point and touch the words as you read? Can she identify the front and back covers and the title of a book?
- Letter naming
Identify the upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet when presented out of order.
- Letter sounds
Identify the sound that each letter makes in a reasonable amount of time.
- High frequency words (sight words)
Recognize and read 50 words, including the color words.
- CVC word recognition
Read simple one-syllable words with a consonant-vowel-consonant letter pattern using short vowel sounds. (/b/ /e/ /t/ bet)
- Story comprehension
Identify characters, setting, and key events of a familiar story. Teacher may ask questions using the words "who, what, where, why, when."
- Timed Nonsense word fluency
Sound out or read simple make-believe CVC words in a one-minute timed reading.
(/d/ /a/ /g/ dag)

- Timed letter naming
Name as many upper and lowercase letters arranged in a random order in one minute.
- Timed reading passage
Read a passage containing sight words and decodable words for one minute.
- Write alphabet legibly
Write upper and lowercase letter legibly. A few reversed letters is acceptable.
- Writing level
Writing level will be evaluated using the BUSD kindergarten writing rubric.
- Word writing
Child will be asked to write as many words as he can in three minutes.
- Sentence dictation
Student will write a simple sentence as dictated by the teacher. Sentence will include sight words and easily decodable CVC words.

Kindergarten Math Assessments

- Identify sets of objects with more, less, and equal numbers
- Count to 100
- Count objects to 30
- Identify numerals out of order to 30
- Match numbers of objects to the correct numeral to 30
- Put numerals in order to 30
- Write numerals to 30
- Name shapes (circle, square, triangle, rectangle, oval, star, diamond, sphere, cone, cube)
- Recite the days of the week in order
- Demonstrate knowledge of AB, AAB, and ABC pattern
- Sort objects 3 different ways
- Demonstrate the concepts of addition and subtraction
- Complete and interpret a graph
- Use math strategies to solve a problem